

## 10-11 CATEGORY

### 1st: "While the Kettle's On" – Sydney Brandolino

**Comments:** This story takes a small, everyday situation and gives it deeper meaning, without becoming over-dramatic. Short, sharp sentences are used effectively to build up emotional tension.

#### "While the Kettle's On" by Sydney Brandolino

Emmanuella loved tea. Personally, I'm not a fan, (to me it tastes like dishwater) but she adored it. Every morning she would slip out of bed, tip-toe to the kitchen, and flick our teal kettle on. And while the kettle was bubbling away, she'd always ask me:

"Do you want anything while the kettle's on?"

I'd always say no, it was a routine we had. I knew the question before she asked it, and she knew the reply before I answered. Just as predictable as the kettle taking three minutes to boil.

I wish I would have said yes one of those times. Wish I would have choked down sencha or English breakfast or blueberry-peach. Wish I would have just loaded my brew with sugar and milk and pretended to like it. Wish she would have stayed home to finish another cup instead of heading out.

I wish for a lot of things.

Sometimes I still hear her slip out of bed. Phantom feet tip-toeing over the floor. The ghost of her voice asking me her signature question. I flick the kettle on and see her, grinning and full of life. But then the kettle cools and she vanishes with the steam. The mug in her hand shatters and I realise I was holding it all along.

The shards are shiny in the light. Just like the ring that now sits in one of my drawers. Discarded and abandoned (and still in its velvet box).

The sink is emptier now. Less mugs and teaspoons, I guess.

I try to drink tea sometimes. I try my best to choke it down, no matter how dishwater-like it is. I'd do it everyday if it meant that I'd hear her ask me one more time:

"Do you want anything while the kettle's on?"



**Sydney Brandolino**

*Sydney Brandolino is a Year 11 at Westlake Girls' High School. "Writing has been a passion of mine since I was 8 years old and writing haiku poems about waterfalls. While I tend to write slightly different pieces now, that same passion that I had some seven years later hasn't changed."*